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Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Thematic evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Secretariat

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

"Nearly 15 years after the initial General Assembly resolution on gender mainstreaming, every Secretariat programme has responded to it, but the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been uneven and its contribution to gender equality has been unclear"

Summary

The present evaluation is the first Secretariat-wide review of gender mainstreaming to be undertaken at the United Nations. Its objective is to review the implementation and outcomes of gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat nearly 15 years after its introduction.

The evaluation, which assesses 20 programmes within the United Nations Secretariat, is focused on gender mainstreaming in the main pillars of the work of the Organization: peace and security; humanitarian assistance and development; and human rights. The internal administrative processes of the Secretariat have been excluded from the evaluation, as have programmes and policies specifically targeted at women.

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The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) found that, while every Secretariat programme covered by the evaluation had responded to the gender mainstreaming mandates, further steps were needed before the General Assembly's vision of "an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective" could be achieved. The OIOS examination of Secretariat activities and public documents, together with interview and survey data, revealed:

- A range of different structures and processes for gender mainstreaming across the Secretariat
- Considerable gaps in the understanding of the meaning, purpose and practical implications of gender mainstreaming
- Weaknesses in leadership and accountability
- Lack of visibility of the gender perspective in public documents
- Lack of comprehensive and systematic evidence of results

OIOS concluded that the priority of the Secretariat appeared to have been to ensure that appropriate structures and processes were in place rather than focusing on what they were delivering. OIOS found that the link between the structures and processes and their results was weak or missing. As a result, OIOS was unable to draw definitive conclusions about the overall outcomes of gender mainstreaming or its effectiveness in advancing gender equality.

The findings and conclusions in the present report mirror those made in previous assessments of gender mainstreaming initiatives at the United Nations and in other organizations, and reveal that, when all the necessary elements are in place, gender mainstreaming can work. The examples included in the report underscore the potential of gender mainstreaming to change working methods and contribute to gender equality.

The shortfalls identified by OIOS were in practice rather than policy, and the Office is of the opinion that the lack of alignment between policy and practice poses a risk to the reputation of the United Nations, which has committed to and has promoted gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality.

OIOS concludes that, if commitment to gender mainstreaming is to be reinforced and action is to be more visible and effective, the focus needs to shift from processes to results. Reinvigoration of the Secretariat's approach will be needed if it is to deliver on its commitment and generate visible results. The formation of the new gender entity is an opportunity for such reinvigoration.

OIOS encourages the architects of the new gender entity, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women, to take the findings contained in this report into account when developing the mandate of the Entity and considering its resources and structure. It urges the governing body of UN Women to seek a further evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat within three years of its launch, building on the baselines established in this report.

OIOS recommends that the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women strengthen the central guidance available to Secretariat programmes and ensure greater coordination of their efforts by:

- Seeking a visible recommitment to gender mainstreaming at the highest level
- Developing a Secretariat-wide approach to the development of staff capabilities to implement gender mainstreaming
- Providing a central hub of expertise to enable gender experts to work together with Secretariat programmes
- Developing guidelines to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated in consistent ways in common Secretariat tasks

OIOS also recommends that each Secretariat programme covered by this evaluation reinforce its commitment to gender mainstreaming and strengthen its results focus by:

- Ensuring that it has developed and disseminated a programme-level gender mainstreaming action plan
- Establishing clear expectations for managers and staff at all levels and developing the resources and staff capabilities to deliver on those expectations
- Ensuring that, if retained, focal points who are not specialized in gender mainstreaming have specific terms of reference and are well supported
- Building an evidence base by actively collecting and analysing outcomes, best practices and lessons learned in gender mainstreaming.

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I. Introduction

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a thematic evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Secretariat from October 2009 to July 2010.[1] The evaluation was initiated following a risk assessment carried out by the Division, in which it identified gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting strategic priority of the United Nations. The topic was also selected for evaluation since no Secretariat-wide evaluation of gender mainstreaming had yet been undertaken.

2. The objective of the evaluation was to review the implementation and outcomes of gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat nearly 15 years after its introduction. Specifically, OIOS sought to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness, including the impact, of the policies and structures in place and the activities being undertaken to implement gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Secretariat, as well as the outcomes to date.

3. The stated goal of gender mainstreaming is gender equality (see para. 7 below). Gender mainstreaming in the United Nations involves the application of a gender perspective in all its work in order to ensure that the different needs and circumstances of women and men are identified and taken into account when policies and projects are developed and implemented. Gender equality is also the goal of policies and projects directly targeted either at women or men. These elements, mainstreaming and targeted activity, form a dual approach that has been adopted by many international organizations, regional and multilateral institutions and government ministries. The elements have clear links and involve different but complementary structures, activities and skills.

4. The evaluation focused only on the mainstreaming element of the dual approach, excluding targeted activities. It also excluded the internal administrative processes of Secretariat programmes, such as recruitment, training and workplace policies and procedures. Although gender mainstreaming is also part of these activities, it was the view of OIOS that this aspect of gender mainstreaming is generally well reported. Instead, the evaluation focused on gender mainstreaming in the main pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security; humanitarian assistance and development; and human rights. The following 20 programmes were identified for inclusion in the evaluation:[2]

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[1] The evaluation is in accordance with the mandate assigned to OIOS under General Assembly resolution 48/218 B and further articulated in the Secretary-General's bulletin on the establishment of the office (ST/SGB/273). It was conducted according to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8), in particular articles II, IV and VII.

[2] Excluded from the evaluation were: the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Management, the Department of Public Information, the Department of Safety and Security, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General did not provide separate input to the evaluation.

(a) Department of Economic and Social Affairs;

(b) Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support;[3]

(c) Department of Political Affairs;

(d) Economic Commission for Africa (ECA);

(e) Economic Commission for Europe (ECE);

(f) Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC);

(g) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP);

(h) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA);

(i) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

(j) Office for Disarmament Affairs;

(k) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR);

(l) Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS);

(m) Office of the Special Adviser on Africa;

(n) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD);

(o) United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);

(p) United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat);

(q) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);

(r) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);

(s) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

References in the report to "Secretariat programmes" relate to these 20 programmes alone.

5. The draft evaluation report was shared with all Secretariat entities, and the present report incorporates comments received, where appropriate.

II. Background

6. In 1995, by its resolution 50/203, the General Assembly established gender mainstreaming as a United Nations system-wide policy, calling for the promotion of "an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective" across the system "at all levels, including in the design, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes". The policy, which recognized that gender-neutral approaches did not address discrimination against women and inequalities between women and men, was intended to ensure effective implementation of the Beijing

[3] The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support provided a combined response.

Platform for Action. In 1999, the Assembly urged the Secretary-General "to intensify his efforts to ensure that managers are held accountable for gender mainstreaming in their areas of responsibility and that gender mainstreaming is systematically integrated into the reform process of the United Nations, including the work of the executive committees" (General Assembly resolution 53/120, para. 6). The Assembly also requested all bodies dealing with programme and budgetary matters "to ensure that all programmes, medium-term plans and, in particular, programme budgets visibly mainstream a gender perspective" (ibid., para. 8), and requested the Secretariat "to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports, so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation" (ibid., para. 9).

7. For the purpose of implementing the mandates contained in the above resolutions, the Secretariat adopted the definition of gender mainstreaming contained in the agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council (A/52/3/Rev.1, chap. IV, sect. A):

> "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

8. Responsibility for the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the United Nations Secretariat rests with the Secretary-General and senior managers.[4] Promotion of gender mainstreaming is also included in the mandates of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Guidelines issued by the Office in 2002 for the United Nations system as a whole are still in use.[5] The Secretary-General reports annually to the Economic and Social Council on measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to and implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and to the General Assembly on the extent to which intergovernmental bodies mainstream gender perspectives into their work. A report on the ways in which Member States mainstream gender at the national level is also provided to the Commission on the Status of Women.

9. The commitment to gender mainstreaming has been reinforced in a number of documents since the late 1990s. Among them, the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) and the 2006 United Nations System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women[6] endorsed gender mainstreaming as an important tool for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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[4] See General Assembly resolutions 50/203 (para. 30) and 52/100, para. 8.

[5] See *Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview*, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2002.

[6] See CEB/2006/2 and Corr.1.

10. Since the late 1990s, evaluations of gender mainstreaming have been initiated by a number of organizations.[7] Their findings have been consistent. All raised questions about the effectiveness and efficiency with which the strategy was being implemented. Inadequacies in analytical work, planning, reporting systems, mechanisms for accountability, resources and support structures were also identified. Despite some debate in academic and policy forums about the utility of mainstreaming as an approach, these evaluations did not conclude that the strategy of mainstreaming should be abandoned, but rather that means be found to address gaps and inadequacies in implementation.

11. In September 2009, in its resolution 63/311, the General Assembly endorsed the creation of a new composite entity, consolidating the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and taking into account their existing mandates. UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was established by the Assembly in its resolution 64/289 of 2 July 2010 and will be operational by January 2011. Its main roles are to support intergovernmental bodies in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms, to help Member States to implement these standards, and to hold the United Nations system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including gender mainstreaming. The decision of the Assembly was taken into account in shaping the present evaluation.

III. Methodology

12. OIOS sought to establish the structures, resources, accountability, challenges and outcomes associated with gender mainstreaming in each Secretariat programme covered by the evaluation. For that purpose, and in line with the published guidance of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on gender mainstreaming, OIOS looked for evidence that:

(a) Consideration was given to the potential for a problem, policy or programme to affect women and men differently;

(b) Services were designed and delivered in ways that ensure accessibility to both women and men;

(c) The views of both women and men were taken into account when analysing situations or policies and designing and implementing programmes;

(d) Progress and outcomes were reported in gender-disaggregated terms, when relevant.[5]

13. OIOS used the following combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods:

[7] Including the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) (1995), UN-Habitat (2003), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2006), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2007), the World Bank (2010) and OHCHR (2010).

(a) Document analysis was conducted to obtain objective data through a review of Secretariat documents, including the 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 strategic frameworks, the programme performance report for 2008-2009 and a range of published documents of all Secretariat programmes covered under the evaluation. OIOS looked for evidence of the active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective called for by gender mainstreaming resolutions. Previous evaluations, as well as existing guidance, action plans, tools and reports, were also reviewed;

(b) Interviews were conducted with focal points in all Secretariat programmes that had appointed them, with senior managers of the Secretariat bodies with mandates for gender mainstreaming (the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women) and with UNIFEM and several non-governmental organizations dealing with gender issues in order to understand how gender mainstreaming policies are applied throughout the Secretariat and to identify particular successes and challenges (29 such interviews were conducted). A range of Secretariat programme managers were also interviewed (49 programme managers in all), and their views on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in their respective work areas were recorded;

(c) A web-based survey of all 20 Secretariat programmes covered by the evaluation (referred to in the report as the "programme-level survey") was undertaken to map the policies, structures and activities being undertaken to implement gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat and to seek information on outcomes and factors contributing to outcomes.[8] A single response was sought on behalf of each entity;

(d) A web-based survey of programme managers (referred to in the report as "the programme managers survey") was undertaken to obtain quantitative data on their understanding of their role in implementing gender mainstreaming and of the obstacles they face, and to seek their views on outcomes and factors contributing to outcomes;[9]

(e) Case studies were undertaken of United Nations operations in the Sudan and Colombia. The Sudan was chosen as a location since all three elements of United Nations work are undertaken in the country (peace and security, humanitarian and development, and human rights), and Colombia was chosen because it hosts a number of Secretariat programmes with a long-established presence in the country. In both locations, interviews were conducted with programme managers and staff, their partners in the United Nations system and the donor community, as well as Government and civil society stakeholders.[10] OIOS also sought evidence of the impact of gender mainstreaming activities on beneficiaries;

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[8] The survey was sent to all designated evaluation focal points in the Secretariat. It was open for replies from 10 March to 14 May 2010. OIOS received responses from all 20 Secretariat programmes covered by the evaluation — a 100 per cent response rate.

[9] Surveys were sent to all staff members from the P-4 to D-2 levels in all Secretariat programmes covered by the evaluation; except UNHCR where no staff list could be obtained. The survey was sent to 3,035 staff members, of whom 605 responded, yielding a 20 per cent response rate.

[10] Thirty-three interviews were conducted in the Sudan and 26 in Colombia.

(f) A comparative analysis was made of approaches to gender mainstreaming in non-Secretariat United Nations entities and in international organizations recognized as having strong gender mainstreaming programmes. OIOS conducted interviews with gender specialists and programme staff in the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and with gender specialists in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (14 such interviews were conducted), and sought data to compare their gender mainstreaming policies, structures and activities against those of the Secretariat.

14. This combination of qualitative and quantitative data sources ensured robust evaluation findings. OIOS also contracted an expert adviser in gender and gender mainstreaming issues to assist in the development of the terms of reference and data collection instruments, to advise on data analysis and to assist in the development of findings.

15. The evaluation methodology had two main limitations: (a) the relatively low response rate achieved in the programme managers survey means that the results cannot be generalized to represent the views of the Secretariat as a whole; and (b) the complex range of factors affecting changes in gender equality, which precluded conclusive statements about the impact of gender mainstreaming on gender equality.

IV. Findings

A. Every Secretariat programme covered by the evaluation had established structures and processes to implement the gender mainstreaming mandates

Approaches to gender mainstreaming varied across and within programmes

16. Responses to the OIOS programme-level survey showed the range of structures and processes (including policies, tools, resources, capacity development, monitoring and accountability arrangements) used to implement gender mainstreaming across the Secretariat. As illustrated in table 1, a mix of structures and processes in place varied among the 20 programmes engaged in the survey. For example, according to the survey, 12 of the 19 programmes that responded had developed a policy or strategy on gender mainstreaming or disseminated programme-specific guidelines on its implementation. Among those that had developed guidelines, some had tailored them to individual subprogrammes, regions and countries, while others applied programme-wide guidelines. Many had a gender unit or adviser, and some also had specialist gender expertise at field locations. Such expertise is referred to in the report as "specialist gender expertise". Other programmes had developed a network of gender focal points, who had gender mainstreaming responsibilities in addition to their substantive work. Such positions are referred to in the report as "non-specialist gender focal points". Accountability lines had been defined in some programmes and not in others, and approaches to resourcing, capacity development, monitoring and reporting were also varied.

17. Interviews and document analysis indicated that even where particular responses were in place, their content and level of detail differed substantially among Secretariat programmes. For example, only half of the gender action plans

analysed included specific gender mainstreaming objectives, and only three of those plans went beyond objectives to specify required actions for staff at each level.

18. Interview data also revealed that the implementation of gender mainstreaming varied within programmes. Different practices could be found within the same programme, reflecting differences in work content and opportunities, as well as differences in the willingness of staff and their partners (including United Nations entities that are not part of the Secretariat) to take up those opportunities. During the field missions to Colombia and the Sudan, OIOS found good practices at the field level that were not always present at other field locations. For example, the gender unit at the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) in Khartoum had assigned individual staff to work with particular operational units within the Mission to ensure better understanding of the opportunities for gender mainstreaming in those units, an arrangement that is not required of peacekeeping missions by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at headquarters.

Table 1
Implementation of gender mainstreaming
(Dot indicates response in place)

Response[a]	*DESA*	*DPKO/DFS*	*DPA*	*ECA*	*ECE*	*ECLAC*	*ESCAP*	*ESCWA*	*OCHA*	*ODA*	*OHCHR*[b]	*OHRLLS*	*OSAA*	*UNCTAD*	*UNEP*	*UNHCR*	*UN-Habitat*	*UNODC*	*UNRWA*
Policy																			
Policy or strategy in place		●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●				●	●	●		●
Structure																			
Programme-level gender unit/specialist	●	●		●		●	●	●	●		●				●	●	●		●
Programme-level non-gender specialist focal point			●		●					●		●	●	●				●	●
Gender unit or adviser in each field location (where applicable)		●	●	●				●			●				●				
Gender focal points in each division		●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●
Advice and assistance from gender focal points/gender unit given to staff	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Tools																			
Central guidelines for implementation		●		●			●	●	●	●	●		●			●	●		●
Guidelines tailored to subprogrammes, regions and/or countries	●	●		●		●	●	●		●	●				●				●
Resources																			
Allocated funding			●	●			●	●			●			●			●		
Mechanism tracking devoted human resources		●		●				●			●		●	●		●			
Mechanism tracking devoted financial resources				●							●			●					
Capacity development																			
Training for gender focal points		●		●			●	●			●				●	●			●
Training for staff		●	●	●			●	●	●		●				●	●	●		●
Compulsory training																			
Accountability																			
Clear lines of accountability			●	●			●	●		●	●		●			●	●		
In e-PAS documentation for gender focal points		●	●	●	●		●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
In e-PAS documentation for staff							●			●	●								●
In recruitment documentation	●	●	●	●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Monitoring and reporting																			
Gender audit or evaluation conducted within the last five years			●	●			●		●		●		●	●	●	●			●
Collection of sex-disaggregated data	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●				●		●	●	●
Gender-sensitive indicators			●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●		●		●
Dissemination of best practices, suggestions and examples		●			●		●	●	●	●							●		●

(Footnotes on following page)

(Footnotes to table 1)

[a] Dot indicates that a response is in place.

[b] Includes initiatives currently being implemented. Other initiatives are planned.

Abbreviations: DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; DFS, Department of Field Support; DPA, Department of Political Affairs; DPKO, Department of Peacekeeping Operations; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; ODA, Office for Disarmament Affairs; OHCHR, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; OHRLLS, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; OSAA, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

19. Secretariat structures and activities showed many similarities with those of other entities and jurisdictions recognized as having strong gender mainstreaming policies. Comparator entities typically included similar elements and always included a policy or strategy, central guidelines, access to gender expertise and clear lines of accountability.

Most programmes expected staff to incorporate a gender perspective in their work

20. In addition to the structures and processes in place to implement gender mainstreaming, the majority of Secretariat programmes also agreed with statements in the OIOS survey that indicated that a gender perspective was incorporated, at least to some extent, in their work (see table 2).[11] The statements in table 2 were based on the guidelines of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, and OIOS believes that they should be considered the minimum expectation for all programmes covered by the evaluation. However, the survey revealed that not all programmes applied all the practices listed in the table, and three programmes reported that they applied none of them.

[11] The statements reflect the guidance provided by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, as referred to in para. 12 above.

Table 2
Programme practices with regard to gender mainstreaming

	Number of programmes[a]	
	Yes	*No*
When preparing documents, staff are expected to consider the possibility that a problem, policy or programme may have different impacts on women and men, girls and boys	12	5
Staff are expected to design and deliver services in ways that will ensure accessibility to both women and men	11	4
Staff are expected to take account of the views of women and men when analysing situations or policies and designing and implementing programmes	12	6
Staff are expected to report on progress and outcomes in gender-disaggregated terms, when relevant	13	4

[a] The total number of programmes does not add up to 19 because some programmes responding to the survey did not provide response to each question.

The resources devoted to gender mainstreaming were unknown

21. OIOS noted that few programmes claimed to track the human and/or financial resources associated with gender mainstreaming. OIOS acknowledges that precise tracking is inherently difficult since a gender perspective, like other cross-cutting issues, is intended to infuse the work of all staff working in a programme. However, the lack of any such information made it impossible to track trends in resourcing or assess efficiency. As noted above (see para. 15), OIOS was unable to test hypotheses concerning the extent of the resources now devoted to gender mainstreaming or changes in their mix. Nor was it able to test perceptions expressed in interviews and surveys that gender mainstreaming needed more and/or dedicated resources or, importantly, that the commitment of resources had stalled.

Coordination mechanisms had been developed but had not reached their potential

22. OIOS recognizes that, given the wide variety of programmes within the Secretariat, there will always be a need to tailor responses to the specific mandates and circumstances of individual programmes and locations; what makes sense operationally for one programme does not necessarily make sense for another. However, OIOS noted that fragmentation in the approach to gender mainstreaming has resulted in a proliferation of programme-level tools, training and indicators with little, if any, system-wide coherence. In searching for effective approaches, each programme appears to be constantly "reinventing" initiatives and failing to learn from the experience of others.

23. A number of coordination platforms exist within the United Nations system, including the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which is focused on humanitarian activities. Both have developed guidelines, tools and processes to support the implementation of gender mainstreaming and sharing of best practices, and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality is currently working on minimum standards and web-based training. The extent to which these are improving the efficiency and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat is, however,

unclear. In interviews, a number of programme managers indicated that their first responsibility was to implement the approach and deliver the reporting requirements of their own programme, which limited the extent to which they could adopt more coordinated approaches. This point was made strongly in the field, where Secretariat programmes and other entities met frequently in an inter-agency setting to work on joint initiatives. If best practices in gender mainstreaming were shared, they could not necessarily be imported to individual programmes, since each operated within its own gender mainstreaming architecture.

24. Best practices in the development of training, guidelines, tools and indicators specific to common areas of work were not systematically shared across the Secretariat. Only six programmes and 29 per cent of respondents to the programme managers survey said that best practices for gender mainstreaming were compiled and disseminated to staff. Where they were disseminated, it was generally within rather than across entities. A number of interviewees suggested that it might be useful to supplement the work of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality by establishing additional online forums to enable more systematic compilation and sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

25. At the central level, the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts supports the financial and budgetary operations of the Secretariat as a whole. The budget instructions distributed by the Office contain guidelines on gender mainstreaming, including the requirement that gender mainstreaming be reflected in the proposed budgets and strategic frameworks of all programmes.[12] This establishes common expectations for all programmes. OIOS was advised, however, that no central, systematic enforcement and/or monitoring and evaluation of compliance with gender mainstreaming guidelines in proposed budgets is undertaken.

B. Considerable gaps were evident in the understanding of the meaning, purpose and practical implications of gender mainstreaming

The concept and benefits of gender mainstreaming were insufficiently understood

26. Despite the range of activities associated with gender mainstreaming in Secretariat programmes, gender focal points (both gender specialists and non-specialists) expressed doubt in interviews about the extent to which Secretariat staff in general understood gender mainstreaming policies and were able to apply them in their daily work. Furthermore, responses to the OIOS programme managers survey revealed that less than half "always" or "mostly" believed that staff understood what gender mainstreaming is and why it should be implemented. Perhaps reflecting a more detailed knowledge of the policy and/or higher expectations, programme-level survey respondents were even less confident than programme managers that staff understood the policy.

[12] See *Budget Instructions: Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2010-2011* (http://ppbd.un.org/Bi10/Instructions10-11.doc).

Table 3
Understanding of gender mainstreaming
(In percentage)

	Staff understand what gender mainstreaming is				
	Always	*Mostly*	*Sometimes*	*Never*	*Don't know*
Programme-level survey respondents	0	37	58	5	0
Programme managers survey respondents	10	35	44	5	6

	Staff understand why it is implemented				
	Always	*Mostly*	*Sometimes*	*Never*	*Don't know*
Programme-level survey respondents	0	42	53	5	0
Programme managers survey respondents	11	34	41	6	8

27. Other evidence reinforces this finding. In interviews, a significant number of interviewees confused gender mainstreaming with the achievement of gender balance (that is, the numerical representation of women and men on staff, in decision-making bodies or among attendees at training sessions or meetings). When asked how gender mainstreaming contributed to the goal of gender equality, interviewees at all levels often struggled to offer concrete or documented examples. Many referred simply to the mechanisms in place, and showed limited understanding of the ways in which gender mainstreaming could contribute to gender equality. Mixed views on the contribution of gender mainstreaming in their programme/work area to gender equality were also recorded by the staff and programme-level respondents to OIOS surveys (see table 4).

Table 4
Understanding of gender mainstreaming benefits
(In percentage)

	Gender mainstreaming in my programme/work area contributes to the achievement of gender equality				
	Yes, entirely	*To a great extent*	*To some extent*	*Not at all*	*Don't know*
Programme-level survey respondents	11	26	53	5	5
Programme managers survey respondents	14	15	46	12	13

28. The misunderstanding was also reflected in differences in assumptions about the relevance of mainstreaming to particular types of work. Interviewees revealed considerable frustration over perceived expectations that gender mainstreaming can be applied in all or most work areas. In response to OIOS survey questions, only 57 per cent of respondents to the programme managers survey agreed that it was "always" or "mostly" possible to apply a gender perspective to the activities of their work unit, compared with 89 per cent of programme-level survey respondents (see table 5). Just under half of programme managers (49 per cent) but over three-quarters of programmes (79 per cent) reported that taking a gender perspective "always" or "mostly" assisted in achieving the objectives of the programme.

Table 5
Relevance of gender mainstreaming to the work of programmes
(In percentage)

	It is possible to apply a gender perspective in the work of the programme				
	Always	*Mostly*	*Sometimes*	*Never*	*Don't know*
Programme-level survey respondents	47	42	11	0	0
Programme managers survey respondents	26	31	36	4	3

	Taking a gender perspective assists in achieving the objectives of the programme				
	Always	*Mostly*	*Sometimes*	*Never*	*Don't know*
Programme-level survey respondents	53	26	21	0	0
Programme managers survey respondents	22	27	39	8	4

29. Most interviewees and many survey respondents also suggested that improving understanding of the concept and benefits of gender mainstreaming among staff should be a priority for their programmes. A number of interviewees suggested that the best incentive to implement gender mainstreaming was understanding how the adoption of a gender perspective would make their programmes more effective. The World Bank built on this idea in its 2007-2010 gender action plan, in which improving gender equality was also seen as "smart economics" that would advance the core objectives of the World Bank.[13] Other interviewees pointed out the centrality of gender equality to human rights, one of the main pillars of the work of the United Nations.

Understanding of how to implement gender mainstreaming was also lacking

30. Even further behind the understanding of the concept and the benefits of gender mainstreaming was the understanding of how gender mainstreaming is implemented. Both in surveys and interviews, staff conveyed gaps in their understanding of how to apply gender mainstreaming to their programmes and their work. Once again, as shown in table 6 below, respondents to the programme managers survey recorded a somewhat more positive assessment of staff understanding than the programme-level survey respondents. However, in response to another question, they rated inconsistent understanding among staff of how to operationalize gender mainstreaming as the main obstacle to its implementation.

[13] *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Action Plan*, World Bank, 2007.

Table 6
Understanding of application of gender mainstreaming
(In percentage)

	Staff understand how to apply gender mainstreaming in their work				
	Always	*Mostly*	*Sometimes*	*Never*	*Don't know*
Programme-level survey respondents	0	11	78	11	0
Programme managers survey respondents	6	24	52	9	9

31. Multiple reasons were suggested by interviewees and survey respondents for this perceived lack of understanding of the application of gender mainstreaming. They included tools that focus on the identification of problems rather than solutions; a lack of specific examples; intimidating language, goals and expectations associated with gender mainstreaming; and a sense that the task requires expert staff and knowledge. Some programme managers believed that time and other resource constraints meant that gender mainstreaming their daily work was a low priority, and some felt that gender specialists and subject specialists did not sufficiently understand each other. In the words of one interviewee, "Not only do we have to be trained in gender issues, but the gender expert working with us also has to be trained in our substantive area of work".

32. Where specific guidelines and tools had been developed for particular types of work, they were considered more relevant and useful than generic training. For example, in UNMIS, where staff of the gender unit worked directly with staff in each subject area in the Mission, specific responses could be developed to specific issues and opportunities, particularly in the area of technical cooperation. The UNHCR "tool for participatory assessment" was also well regarded, relevant to situations faced by UNHCR and easy to use by non-specialist staff. Other programmes had also developed guidelines for gender mainstreaming for use by their staff which are tailored to subprogrammes, regions and/or countries (see table 1).

33. Nevertheless, many interviewees considered the guidance and tools available to them to be too general to guide approaches to their specific tasks. Some also expressed frustration with the tools available, which enabled the identification of gender inequalities but did not necessarily empower staff without specific gender training to devise solutions to address them.

Current approaches to training have not resulted in practical understanding of gender mainstreaming

34. While all staff are responsible for applying a gender perspective to their work, not everyone has been trained to do so. Fewer than half of programme managers surveyed (35 per cent) reported having completed training in gender mainstreaming in the last five years, and of those who are also gender focal points only a little over half (55 per cent) had completed training for that role. Some programmes reported providing specific training to staff (47 per cent) and gender focal points (37 per cent), but in most cases it was not compulsory for all staff, customized to particular work situations or offered on a regular basis. OIOS found that staff in UNESCO, which has made gender mainstreaming training compulsory, reported benefits in

terms of greater staff understanding and implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy.

35. A number of programme managers interviewed by OIOS had participated in training in gender mainstreaming, typically lasting from one to four hours. They reported finding it mostly general in nature and not necessarily applicable or transferable to their respective areas of work. As with much institutional training, no structure or process appeared to be in place to assess the effectiveness of the training, the degree of knowledge retention or application of the material learned, or to provide follow-up support for implementation.

36. The need for more and better capacity-building to enhance understanding was also a consistent theme among interviewees and survey respondents. In both the programme managers survey and interviews, Secretariat staff professed a need for more training, including web-based learning and more traditional approaches. OIOS was also told of mentoring and on-the-job coaching initiatives that have been effective in other organizations. As noted in paragraph 23 above, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality has commissioned the development of a major new initiative in gender mainstreaming training for use across the United Nations system. OIOS commends the initiative as potentially filling gaps in training identified in the present evaluation.

There was evidence, however, that staff acceptance of the idea of gender mainstreaming had increased since the gender mainstreaming mandates were adopted

37. OIOS notes that staff acceptance of the idea of gender mainstreaming is a critical precondition for its implementation, and that interviewees generally perceived such acceptance to be both broad and growing. While some pointed to pockets of continuing resistance or even "pushback", and others noted that their work lacked easy or obvious gender dimensions or that other priorities competed for attention, most felt that staff awareness and expectations were conducive to the implementation of gender mainstreaming. This was also evident in the extent to which references to gender mainstreaming are now included in recruitment documentation and in performance assessments at the Secretariat (see table 1). This was attributed to the sustained rhetoric that has surrounded the issue in United Nations forums and among partners and donors, as well as to cultural change within the Secretariat itself.

C. Leadership and accountability for gender mainstreaming were seen as weak

Roles and responsibilities for gender mainstreaming were unclear

38. The Secretary-General and senior managers carry the responsibility for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Secretariat (see para. 8 above). While it follows that all subprogrammes and staff members have a role to play, OIOS found that the expectations of particular work units and staff at different levels to deliver on gender mainstreaming are unclear. Only three programmes included some statement on roles and responsibilities for management and staff at various levels in their gender action plans. This was in contrast to ILO,

for example, where responsibilities are clearly documented and disseminated to all staff.[14]

39. As noted above (see para. 28), not all programme managers interviewed and surveyed believed that it was possible to apply a gender perspective to their work. Among those who did, however, the evidence from both surveys and interviews suggested that many were unclear about their role and regarded the gender specialists and/or focal points within their programme as those with primary responsibility for implementation. The gender focal points interviewed pointed out that their role was to offer advice and act as a quality check, but claimed they were often expected to carry out gender mainstreaming work. Some commented that staff routinely referred to them any document including the word "gender" or "women", or sent their documents for the required gender "add-on" when necessary. This was reported as especially burdensome on non-specialist gender focal points, who took on the role in addition to their non-gender related work.

40. OIOS also identified a risk of gender mainstreaming being overlooked completely by staff and managers. Only 37 per cent of programme managers surveyed said that staff were expected to consult their gender focal points when documents and plans were developed, and only 33 per cent of gender focal points said it was "always" or "mostly" true that their colleagues sought their advice and support in relation to gender mainstreaming.

41. . OIOS surveys revealed that only 42 per cent of respondents to the programme-level survey and an even smaller proportion of respondents to the programme managers survey (27 per cent) believed that clear accountability for gender mainstreaming had been established in their programme. The disparity between the programme-level assessment and that of programme managers suggested confusion within many programmes about roles and responsibilities for gender mainstreaming. Lack of accountability was ranked as the biggest obstacle, after funding constraints, to the implementation of gender mainstreaming by the programmes surveyed, and was seen by a number of interviewees and survey respondents as threatening the sustainability of gender mainstreaming itself.

Senior management compacts and performance assessment tools did not typically recognize contributions to gender mainstreaming or deliver consequences for non-performance

42. The compacts signed by the most senior managers in the Secretariat do not make explicit reference to their responsibility in implementing gender mainstreaming, but include a standard paragraph on ensuring "contribution to the broader interests of the United Nations", including "support for organizational objectives such as ... gender mainstreaming". An OIOS analysis of the 2009 senior management compact assessments showed no reference to this paragraph and/or to gender mainstreaming. While the majority of staff agreed that senior managers in most programmes have made statements indicating a commitment to gender mainstreaming,[15] a number expressed disappointment in interviews and surveys at the extent to which it was apparently possible to deliver "lip service" to gender mainstreaming without obvious consequences for inaction.

[14] See *Action Plan for Gender Equality 2010-15*, ILO, 2010.

[15] Eighty-five per cent of programmes and 66 per cent of programme managers surveyed agreed with this statement in OIOS surveys.

43. OIOS also found that gender mainstreaming was not systematically addressed in documentation for the Secretariat's performance appraisal system (e-PAS). Less than one-third (32 per cent) of respondents to the OIOS programme managers survey said their e-PAS made reference to gender mainstreaming, although 61 per cent said gender mainstreaming was included in recruitment documentation for staff in their work area. Some programme managers who were interviewed suggested that responsibility for gender mainstreaming was implied under the e-PAS goal "respect for diversity", but believed that this was insufficiently specific and not assessed. Even gender focal points did not always have their gender mainstreaming responsibilities and achievements assessed as part of their performance. Less than half of the gender focal points responding to the programme managers survey (44 per cent) reported that their e-PAS documentation made reference to gender mainstreaming, and this was also a common theme in programme-level interviews.

There was a perception that stronger accountability frameworks would provide greater incentives

44. OIOS identified a strong conviction among Secretariat staff that stronger accountability frameworks would provide greater incentives for performance, including on gender mainstreaming. In both the programme-level and programme managers surveys, holding senior managers accountable for implementation was ranked as the number one factor affecting the success of gender mainstreaming and was also one of the top three changes suggested by survey respondents to improve the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming. The point was also made in survey comments, in which some programme managers referred to the need for senior managers in the Secretariat to accept greater responsibility for it. Similar suggestions were also made in the programme-level survey.

45. OIOS found other evidence to support this conviction. At UNHCR, where an accountability framework had been developed,[16] interviewees demonstrated more awareness of gender mainstreaming. Many believed that their gender mainstreaming strategies had delivered results and were able to point to concrete achievements. The comparative analysis conducted by OIOS of gender mainstreaming at ILO and UNESCO also demonstrated that there is a link between the incentives provided by strong accountability frameworks and the achievement of a more systematic approach to gender mainstreaming.

46. In addition, OIOS notes that clearly articulated accountability frameworks in other United Nations priority areas, such as gender balance and geographic representation of staff, have been associated with more tangible results. The human resources action plan, for example, specifies performance indicators and targets for various areas of human resources management, including gender and geographic balance, and these are reported on annually and followed up closely by the Secretariat and the governing bodies. While gender mainstreaming lacks the ready metrics of staff numbers, some interviewees emphasized that "what gets measured gets done", and that specifying indicators and accountability for their monitoring and attainment should be priorities for their programmes.

[16] See *2008-2009 Global Analysis: UNHCR Accountability Framework for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming and Targeted Actions*, UNHCR, 2009.

D. The gender perspective lacked visibility in programme plans and budgets and in Secretariat publications

47. The resolutions referenced in section II established the following specific objectives for gender mainstreaming in the programmes of the United Nations:

(a) An active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective at all levels;

(b) A gender perspective visibly mainstreamed in programme plans and budgets;

(c) Issues and approaches presented in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports;

(d) Making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of all United Nations work so that gender inequality is not perpetuated.

48. Despite the long-standing commitment to gender mainstreaming and the existence of structures and processes to implement it in all the programmes considered in the present evaluation, OIOS found limited evidence, particularly in the public documents of the Secretariat and its component programmes, that these objectives had been met.

49. Gender mainstreaming had low visibility in high-level planning and budget documents. OIOS found that just under half of programmes (47 per cent) specified gender-sensitive expected accomplishments in their 2008-2009 strategic frameworks.[17] That proportion increased to 53 per cent in 2010-2011. The percentage of programmes with gender-sensitive indicators in their strategic frameworks was 47 per cent in 2008-2009, rising to 58 per cent in 2010-2011. Gender-sensitive references were more detailed and specific in the strategic frameworks of programmes with gender-specific subprogrammes, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women), ECA, ECLAC and ESCWA.

50. The Secretary-General's 2008-2009 programme performance report (A/65/70) included at least one reference to gender mainstreaming for 16 of the 19 programmes covered by the evaluation.[18] A separate section on gender mainstreaming contained examples of initiatives taken by the regional commissions, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNEP and a quantitative listing of the proportion of women participating in training courses, seminars and workshops delivered by the Secretariat (ibid., sect. III.H and sect. IV).

51. References to gender mainstreaming were evident to only a minor degree in high-level reporting documents reviewed by OIOS, including the 2008 report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/63/1), which referred to the consideration of the gender dimension with regard to a number of issues, including HIV/AIDS and democracy, and contained sex-disaggregated data on most of the

[17] Gender sensitivity in expected accomplishments and indicators was defined by OIOS to include references to gender groups, differentials or issues in those expected accomplishments and indicators.

[18] The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support reported jointly for the purpose of the calculation.

Millennium Development Goal indicators. The Secretary-General's reports to the Economic and Social Council on gender mainstreaming contained more detailed assessments, highlighting progress at the intergovernmental level and in the United Nations system in implementing mechanisms to facilitate gender mainstreaming,[19] and also included recommendations for improvement. OIOS noted that a number of the reports suggested that gender perspectives were not yet fully integrated into the work of the United Nations, including Secretariat programmes, in line with the responses made in the OIOS programme-level survey.

52. An examination of the major or flagship documents of individual Secretariat programmes revealed that, while some programmes explored gender issues in greater breadth, others released major documents with few, if any, references to the underlying gender dimensions. A number of programmes had published documents exploring the gender aspects of their substantive work (such as disaster assessment, statistics, trade and forest industries), and a gender perspective was also clearly evident in the publications of some programmes and somewhat evident in others. In some cases, gender issues were addressed in dedicated sections of the respective annual reports, which highlighted the importance of the issues but risked the perception that gender is not fully integrated into the totality of their work. In other cases, a more integrated approach was evident, with references suggesting that a gender perspective had been applied in a range of activities.

53. For programmes that do not routinely publish flagship documents,[20] OIOS sought evidence of gender perspectives on their websites. Such information tended to be more limited and summative in nature than that contained in larger documents (for example, the "Facts and Figures" page on the websites of individual missions on the website of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations), although in some cases it included sex-disaggregated data (for example, refugee statistics on the UNHCR website). OIOS found, however, that where sex-disaggregated data had been included in publications or websites, little if any analysis of those data was reported and it was unclear how the data affected the subsequent work or priorities of the programmes.

E. Results were neither tracked nor analysed

Evidence of results was not collected systematically and analysis of the factors differentiating success from failure was lacking

54. OIOS found that the structures and processes in place in Secretariat programmes to implement gender mainstreaming were not matched by measures to assess or understand its results. The outcomes of gender mainstreaming had not been tracked in ways that enable the effectiveness of different approaches to be assessed, and the factors differentiating success from failure were not always understood. As a result, the body of knowledge concerning the outcomes of gender mainstreaming was fragmented and inadequate.

55. Gender-sensitive indicators, in particular, appeared under-used and under-analysed. While they were reported to be in place in 13 programmes (see table 1),

[19] See E/2009/12, E/2008/34, E/2007/33; E/2006/36, E/2005/31, E/2004/4, E/2003/49, E/2002/23 and E/2001/41.

[20] These programmes included the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNHCR and OHCHR.

they typically focused on the availability or use of sex-disaggregated data without any link to outcomes contributing to gender equality. For example, a number of programmes had developed indicators relating to participation in gender training, technical cooperation initiatives or the adoption by programmes or by Member States of gender-sensitive indicators or other mainstreaming initiatives, but only a subset of those programmes included indicators relating to improvements in gender equality or the preconditions for such improvements. A number of good examples of the latter case were found, including the incorporation of women's human rights in national policy and legislation or the improvement of conditions for women in camps or prisons. Nevertheless, in interviews, few programme managers volunteered explanations of how changes in the indicators affected programme-level priorities or activities or how particular interventions impacted them. Where indicators to measure results from gender mainstreaming were in place, interviewees reported that the monitoring of these indicators was not yet "rigorous". In programmes without gender-sensitive indicators such an understanding was likely to be even more limited.

56. The lack of understanding among staff of the results of gender mainstreaming (see paras. 26-29) did not appear to affect perceptions of its effectiveness. As shown in table 7, the vast majority of respondents to both the programme-level and programme managers surveys believed that gender mainstreaming was implemented effectively in their programmes or work areas, at least to some extent. However, perceptions recorded in interviews, where effectiveness could be explored in more detail, were generally less positive.

Table 7
Perceptions of the effectiveness of the implementation of gender mainstreaming
(In percentage)

	My programme/work area implements gender mainstreaming effectively				
	Yes, entirely	*To a great extent*	*To some extent*	*Not at all*	*Don't know*
Programme-level survey respondents	0	21	68	11	0
Programme managers survey respondents	11	16	53	12	8

Monitoring and reporting, when done, were limited and feedback was lacking

57. Progress on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations is assessed through survey and other information compiled by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and reported annually by the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council. While such reports keep mainstreaming visible at the Organization-wide level and are a natural forum for the analysis of results, a number of interviewees questioned their utility. Some suggested that the reporting was superficial or perfunctory in nature and excessively focused on process, while others noted that there seemed to be little follow up and no rewards or sanctions associated with the reported outcomes. Furthermore, the claims of entities in such reports did not appear to be independently verified.

58. Monitoring and reporting at the programme level shared similar features. Most programmes covered by the evaluation have established reporting mechanisms for

gender mainstreaming. Nine of the 12 Secretariat programmes with a policy or strategy on gender mainstreaming indicated in the OIOS survey that those policies or strategies included reporting requirements. Thirteen of the programmes covered by the evaluation also indicated that staff were expected to report on progress and outcomes in sex-disaggregated terms when relevant (see table 2). Periodic progress and other reports were typically prepared within the gender unit or its equivalent, but some programme managers who were required to submit reports expressed frustration at having to "graft" gender references onto activities that may have integrated them superficially at best. Others observed that feedback was not provided on reports, and lessons learned were not shared. One manager reported working to a 100-word limit, which constrained the opportunity to report substantively. OIOS saw no evidence of common standards being applied across programmes in programme-level reporting.

Evidence of the contribution of gender mainstreaming to gender equality was particularly limited

59. OIOS found that attempts to track impact and achievements using quantitative methods lacked validity and robustness. OIOS was told in interviews that evidence of gender mainstreaming is often assessed by counting the frequency of terms such as "gender", "women" and "girls" in documents, or the number of female participants in programme activities, rather than undertaking a considered, qualitative assessment of whether a gender perspective informs work processes. In those few instances where a qualitative assessment had been undertaken, the qualitative reporting of activities focused on ways in which the gender perspective actually entered the work. Influencing and supporting the mainstreaming activities of United Nations commissions and external partners, particularly Member States and civil society organizations, was one category of action highlighted by a number of programmes, including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and OHCHR.[21]

60. The reports of the Secretary-General on gender mainstreaming mentioned above (para. 51) also included examples of its impact on discussions within the United Nations system. OIOS found, however, that many of the examples were drawn from United Nations funds and programmes rather than Secretariat programmes and that the reports focused predominantly on the processes of gender mainstreaming and the systems and capacities to operationalize and report on them, rather than their outcomes in terms of contribution to gender equality. Quantitative data, in particular, were process-focused.

61. OIOS notes that the existence of structures and processes for gender mainstreaming, while necessary for its implementation, should not be considered evidence of its success as a strategy. In the absence of comprehensive information on the inputs to and outcomes of gender mainstreaming, neither Secretariat programmes nor OIOS itself were able to gain a credible understanding of the extent to which structures and processes for gender mainstreaming at the United Nations Secretariat were working effectively or not.

[21] Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2009, *United Nations Peace Operations 2009: Year In Review*; OHCHR, 2009, *Report on Activities and Results*.

Results often relied solely on exceptional individual effort rather than proven systems

62. During the course of its evaluation, OIOS found numerous examples of individual Secretariat staff members who were committed to the objectives of gender mainstreaming, convinced of its relevance and determined to apply it. Such individuals acted as catalysts, motivating their colleagues and generating important outcomes. However, it was also clear that results attributable to individual commitment and initiative are neither predictable nor necessarily sustainable. In more than one programme, OIOS was told of initiatives and partnerships that had been carefully nurtured by one individual or group only to fall victim to neglect when those catalytic forces left the unit or organization. In more than one case, this was considered to have damaged relationships with partners and reduced the likelihood of further initiatives being supported in the future. At the least, such reversals demonstrated the fragility of initiatives based on individual rather than systemic drivers, capabilities and accountabilities.

F. Where results have been achieved, they underscored the potential of gender mainstreaming to improve working methods and to contribute to gender equality

Sustainable results require the right structures, tools and expertise as well as commitment

63. Where adequate structures, tools and expertise were in place in a programme, its ability to deliver consistent results was clearly enhanced. OIOS found examples of programmes, within and outside the Secretariat, where gender mainstreaming had been built into their systems and supported. In those programmes more consistent messages were being delivered to staff and partners. These tended to be larger programmes with dedicated gender units and mandates that involved direct interaction with beneficiary populations, such as civilians in post-conflict or humanitarian situations, refugees and populations at risk of human rights violations. However, they also included several programmes focusing on policy, regulatory and advisory functions. In such programmes, where a sustained investment had been made in specialist expertise and general staff awareness, the drivers for results appeared to be more system-based and less reliant on the existence of committed and resourceful individuals.

Gender mainstreaming was positively affecting work processes and the design and impact of Secretariat programmes

64. Despite limited visibility in many programmes, and the lack of a systematic and solid evidence base for tracking results, OIOS found that gender mainstreaming was changing the way Secretariat programmes approached their work and had the potential to deliver results for beneficiaries and contribute to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming was determined to have had some influence on work processes and programme design, as well as on programme impacts. OIOS was unable to quantify the extent of such influence. While interviewees in almost every programme were able to provide at least one example of results, owing to the lack of data, OIOS could not assess how common or uncommon these examples were.

65. The following examples were provided to OIOS in interviews. They illustrate ways in which gender mainstreaming had exerted a positive effect on work

processes, design and impact of Secretariat programmes. They are illustrative only and are not intended to be comprehensive or representative, and they were not independently verified by OIOS. They do point, however, to the potential for gender mainstreaming to enact positive change and contribute to gender equality.

Examples of attempts to understand differences in the impact of an issue on women and men

The 2007 *World Economic and Social Survey* issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs examined the impact of ageing on women.

ESCWA has examined women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has introduced a module on gender and small arms into the international small arms control standards currently being developed. The module highlights the gender aspects associated with armed violence.

ECLAC has developed a methodological approach and guide to gender analysis in natural disaster assessment in the Caribbean, and its gender division has provided data, advice and staff to assist in assessment.

The UNEP programme framework template requires gender considerations to be incorporated in the situation analysis associated with proposals and project concept development. Guidelines and a checklist for mainstreaming gender into UNEP publications have been circulated to staff.

The adoption of the ECA African Gender and Development Index by a number of countries has led to the identification of several gender disparities, such as vulnerabilities facing female-headed households.

Examples of the collection, compilation and publication of sex-disaggregated data in material prepared for governing bodies, Member States and the public

ECE maintains a large collection of gender statistics in its statistical database, which is regularly used to inform policy discussion. It has developed a manual on gender statistics and is systematically developing capacities for engendering national statistical systems in its Member States.

Rather than including gender material in a dedicated section, every chapter in the ESCAP report on the Millennium Development Goals includes a gender discussion.

The publications of the Statistical Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs routinely include disaggregations by sex of the main statistical aggregates, and *The World's Women: Progress in Statistics*, published every five years, addresses the availability of statistics disaggregated by sex.

UNODC included a short analysis on drugs and gender in its 2010 *World Drug Report*.

UNRWA made a commitment to collecting sex-disaggregated data during the 2008-2009 biennium, which it is now using as a baseline to measure gender gaps in service delivery and identify necessary corrective measures.

Examples of rapid response capabilities

Under a donor-funded Inter-Agency Standing Committee initiative managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a pool of gender advisers is available for deployment to humanitarian coordinators' offices at 72 hours notice to ensure that humanitarian action takes the different needs and capabilities of women, girls, boys and men into equal consideration.

The Department of Political Affairs has developed a joint strategy with UNIFEM for a standby facility of rapidly deployable high-level gender experts for all parties to a peace process. It also compiled a database of women mediators and experts on gender, on which staff can draw for assistance or training.

Examples of greater effectiveness in policy and operations when differential needs are explicitly addressed

UNCTAD recently launched a new work programme on gender, trade and development, which includes five-country studies.

Conscious efforts to increase the number of female police officers in northern and southern Sudan have provided role models for women in the national police force and increased the willingness of women victims to report violations.

Examples of multiplier effects

UNHCR has supported the Ministries of the Colombian Government in introducing a gender perspective into planning for internally displaced persons by assisting in the development of guidelines. The guidelines are now affecting the design of public policy at the national and local levels.

With United Nations support, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Religious Affairs in the Government of Southern Sudan has developed gender mainstreaming tools compliant with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

UNMIS is assisting the Ministry of Social Welfare in the government of Northern Sudan to develop a national policy for the empowerment of women.

Examples of seeking better outcomes for beneficiaries

In one of its biggest technical cooperation projects, the OHCHR office in Colombia worked with the public prosecutor to train prison guards in human rights, including women's human rights, and to study the condition of women in prisons.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is targeting vulnerable groups, including women heads of households, in order to increase the impact of humanitarian relief work.

UN-Habitat has undertaken a joint project with UNIFEM to study the safety and security of women in cities.

V. Conclusion

66. Nearly 15 years after the initial General Assembly resolution on gender mainstreaming, every Secretariat programme has responded to it, but the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been uneven and its contribution to gender equality has been unclear. The understanding among staff of what gender mainstreaming meant for their work was far from universal and the initiatives in place varied in focus and effectiveness. With a number of significant exceptions, its visibility was at best inconsistent and at worst lacking in significant Secretariat documentation. Despite the guidance of central authorities, most recently the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, accountability was largely unenforced and best practices and lessons learned have not been systematically monitored. As a result, its contribution to gender equality is unclear. OIOS concluded that further steps were needed before the General Assembly's vision of "an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective" could be achieved in the Secretariat as a whole.

67. This was not because of lack of input. Implementation has involved the allocation of resources and the creation of structures, processes, training and reporting. While the cost of this is unclear, the effort across the Secretariat has been considerable and the majority of programmes and programme managers believed that gender mainstreaming was implemented effectively in their programme, at least to some extent. The OIOS survey showed that staff acceptance of gender mainstreaming was high — an achievement in itself given the challenges it posed to more conventional approaches and analysis. OIOS nevertheless concluded that it was not yielding results commensurate with the input of effort and thus was inefficient. Inefficiencies were particularly apparent in the lack of integration in common processes as well as in the lack of a means of systematically assessing results, learning from shortcomings and sharing best practices.

68. The processes themselves were not inherently faulty, although their relevance, and hence their ability to deliver results, could be improved by identifying and reinforcing the elements that are recognized and known to work and embedding them in the processes and culture of each programme. Reliance on the commitment and enthusiasm of individual champions (including non-specialist gender focal points), while often inspirational to others, is ultimately unsustainable. Results can be assured and sustained only if the resources and capabilities to deliver them are also assured and sustained. OIOS concluded that more clearly-stated expectations and stronger capacity-building, accountability and monitoring were more likely to create the environment within which a sustained impact on gender equality can be generated. Building staff competence, including training, was a key element in building the capacity to sustain effort and results.

69. The effectiveness of gender mainstreaming must ultimately be judged by its results. OIOS observed good results and good practices in all programmes and does not doubt that gender mainstreaming has had an impact on the work of the programmes and on the beneficiaries of it. However, the lack of comprehensive and systematic evidence of results impeded assessment of its contribution to gender equality, and thus of its effectiveness.

70. OIOS concluded that, if commitment is to be reinforced and action is to be more visible and effective, the focus of the Secretariat approach to gender

mainstreaming needs to shift from process to results. The lack of an evidence base on what works and what does not, and on the results achieved after nearly 15 years of effort, feeds scepticism about the merit of this approach and undermines efficiency. The collection, analysis and dissemination of best practices, lessons learned and achievements would be a step towards genuine understanding of what gender mainstreaming can deliver.

71. OIOS also concluded that if both Secretariat-level coherence and relevance to individual programmes and subprogrammes are to be enhanced a combination of common and tailored approaches was required. Strong central guidance and oversight are crucial for effective, coordinated outcomes, and should establish common expectations among senior leadership and programme managers concerning their role and responsibilities. Efficiency is compromised by uncoordinated approaches to the development of tools, training and indicators and the resulting need for constant reinvention of initiatives. At the same time, support is required to assist individual programmes, particularly the smaller ones, to customize their approach to their own work environments and ensure that gender inequalities can be not only diagnosed but addressed.

72. In the view of OIOS, all Secretariat programmes covered by the evaluation would benefit from an extension of the current guidance provided by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues in order to encompass the development of a comprehensive set of common principles, tools and indicators for common tasks. This could include common training for all staff in core principles and approaches, common reporting templates or standards and coordination and advisory functions. A rethinking of the role of gender focal points and gender specialists may also be necessary in order to ensure broader ownership of and accountability for gender mainstreaming in individual programmes; however, focal points should never be viewed as the sole bearers of responsibility for gender mainstreaming in their work units. The implementation of minimum standards, such as those currently under development for the United Nations System Chief Executives Board, could also be useful, particularly if the standards go beyond process issues and encompass expected outcomes. At the same time, the requirements need to be tailored at the programme and subprogramme level and reinforced by capacity-building, including training, so that staff without specialist gender expertise can be confident of their ability to integrate a gender perspective into their own work. A results focus is crucial.

73. The United Nations has made an unqualified commitment to gender equality as an objective and gender mainstreaming as a tool. The evidence presented here suggests that the achievements of gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat as a whole have not matched the expectations established by that commitment. The framework itself has been endorsed in other evaluations and other jurisdictions. By operating across the totality of an organization's activity, rather than just the subset of that activity that is gender-specific, mainstreaming has the potential to exert a powerful impact on gender equality. It is at the level of practice that shortfalls exist. The lack of alignment between policy and practice carries reputational risk to the United Nations. Reinvigoration of the strategy will be needed if it is to deliver on its commitment and generate visible results.

74. The formation of the new gender entity, UN Women, is an opportunity for such reinvigoration. OIOS encourages the architects of that entity to consider the findings

presented in the present report when developing the mandate of the entity and considering its resources and structure.

75. OIOS also suggests that the launch of UN Women provides an opportunity for an early re-evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat, building on the baselines established in this report. Such a re-evaluation could be done within three years of the launch of the entity. In the meantime, OIOS believes that gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat could be more effective if steps were taken by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and within the programmes themselves to reinforce its implementation within the current framework and actively seek and monitor outcomes.

VI. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women should strengthen the central guidance available to Secretariat programmes and ensure greater coordination of their efforts by:

(a) Seeking a visible recommitment to gender mainstreaming at the highest level by developing explicit expectations and accountability for managers and staff at all levels and encouraging the emergence of senior level "champions";

(b) Developing a Secretariat-wide approach to the development of staff capabilities to implement gender mainstreaming, including through the support of training and on-the-job mentoring;

(c) Providing a central hub of expertise to enable gender experts to work together with Secretariat programmes to identify desired outcomes, establish common standards, analyse and compile results into an evidence base and share best practices;

(d) Developing guidelines to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated in consistent ways in common Secretariat tasks, including planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting, and monitoring their application.

Recommendation 2

Each Secretariat programme covered by this evaluation should reinforce its commitment to gender mainstreaming and strengthen its results focus by:

(a) Ensuring that it has developed and disseminated a programme-level gender mainstreaming action plan that is consistent with its strategic framework and contains desired outcomes and indicators for each subprogramme;

(b) Establishing clear expectations for managers and staff at all levels and developing the resources and staff capabilities to deliver on those expectations;

(c) If non-gender specialist focal points are retained, ensuring that they have specific terms of reference, that their gender work is recognized in the performance appraisal process and that they have access to specialist advice and the opportunity to participate in peer-to-peer networks both within and beyond their programmes;

(d) Building an evidence base by actively collecting and analysing outcomes, best practices and lessons learned in gender mainstreaming.

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